

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER BASIC COURSE
VAN DEMAN PROGRAM

REVISITING COIN THEORY AND INSTRUCTION

VDP VIP BRIEF PAPER

MR. MILLER

BY

1LT ALLISON Y. PAN

FORT HUACHUCA, AZ

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The Van Deman Program in MIOBC has as its pinnacle goal the production of premier analysts for today's Army. I propose that the focus of the MIOBC program at large should be what the Van Deman Program aims for and that all graduates of MIOBC, not simply that handful in every class, are the best analysts they can be. In order to achieve this goal, I believe certain fundamental changes must be made to the MIOBC points of instruction (POI). I focus my changes on the counterinsurgency component of instruction because not only is it the new focus of the Army as a whole but it has also been traditionally the hardest area to teach, understand, and then apply to the tactical environment. We have within the Army a strategic bias towards understanding one side of the insurgency/COIN equation. When David Galula wrote *Counterinsurgency Warfare* he did so because he believed that there was plenty of research on insurgencies but not nearly enough on how to fight insurgencies, the COIN side. I would argue that today, we have overdeveloped the COIN side and virtually abandoned the core reason for needing COIN in the first place – the insurgency side. For these reasons, I have placed my focus on revisiting COIN POI within MIOBC.

The theoretical foundations for COIN that students in MIOBC are taught today are inadequate for a thorough and complete understanding of the operational environment. This inadequacy can lead to analysis failure which in turn leads to decision making failures for commanders down range. There are only three days of instruction on the theoretical foundations for understanding both insurgency and COIN. Of those three days, the third only occurs roughly ten days after students have already spent those days

applying what meager theoretical principles they have learned to practical exercises.

	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43
Module B	Intro to Mod B/ Insurgency and COIN/ Assign Irregular Warfare Case Studies B-1	Irregular Warfare Case Studies (IWCS) Prep/ SACSO/ Intel COIN Book Discussion B-2	Intro OP Desert Lightning II PE/ Urban IPI/ Quiz 1 Study Focus B-3*	Quiz 1/ IED Awareness/ MPG 'Scorpions' TDG B-4*	Collection Management (PIR) B-5*	Collection Management (PIR/NAI/ISM) B-6*	Analytical Tools & IWCS Student Check B-7*	Example BUB & OP Desert Lightning II and PE (BUB 1) B-8*	Analyst Note book/ ARC GIS/ OP Desert Lightning II PE B-9*	Pathfinder/ OP Desert Lightning II PE (12-24 Dec) B-10*	OP Desert Lightning II PE (BUB 2 Bn MB) B-11*	Info Ops and other participants in COIN / ACH/ Quiz 2 Study Focus B-12*	Quiz 2 WCS Briefs OP Desert Lightning II PE 25-26 Dec) BUB 3 (PMB) Quiz 3 Study Focus B-13*	COIN Targeting/ Final Test Study Focus B-14*	Quiz 3 OP Desert Lightning II PE B-15	Mod B Final Test OP Desert Lightning II PE (BUB 4) Mod B AAR B-16*

While technically, we are taught both insurgency and COIN theory, the lion's share of emphasis is placed on COIN. Additionally, what we are taught with regards to insurgency theory rarely extends beyond basic descriptions and generalizations. Even when students are asked to study a selection of 20th century insurgencies in depth, there is a noticeable avoidance of the massive elephant in the room – that insurgencies historically develop within marginalized and oppressed peoples. Rather than focus on the disparities in power and the root causes of political frustration that spark and fuel insurgencies, teachers lead students to examine the case studies from the point of view of the COIN side, inevitably a major Western power. While the lessons of former Western powers fighting insurgencies are invaluable for the United States in both Iraq and Afghanistan today, the lessons to be learned from the insurgents themselves are just as much so if not more important.

In order to understand the insurgency side better, I believe we have to turn to theory and focus on authors who write from the perspective of the marginalized peoples who have contributed so greatly to low intensity conflict worldwide. A good theoretical understanding offers us definitional precision which in turn aids with research and comprehension. Political science and political theory offer major contributions to COIN

theory by providing alternative understandings of politics, power, sovereignty, and many of the other core concepts in COIN theory. International relations theories can help explain conflict as a whole while other theories, such as Marxism and postcolonialism often address the root inequalities that spur ideological fervor within violence. Economic development theorists have valuable insights for grass roots economic development. Feminist authors, by virtue of their emphasis on including women as research variables, have showed how important women, even in heavily patriarchal societies, are to the entire fabric of society. Without the contributions of these feminist scholars, it would have taken policy makers far longer to understand the need to focus on both genders in developing societies. Of course, this is simply a sampling of what theorists from various backgrounds, from politics to economics to sociology and psychology, have to offer to understanding insurgencies and by extension, the COIN fight. Finally, while theories themselves help us understand the significance of certain events, understanding the theories that key decision makers subscribe to can help us not only understand their decisions but predict their future decisions as well.

To address the current shortcomings within the course and to incorporate the additional viewpoints outlined above, I believe that MIOBC needs a new, intensive reading mini-course that brings in authors who specialize in insurgency theory, marginalized/indigenous peoples, alternative histories, cultural and area studies, linguistic studies, and other areas traditionally ignored by military strategists and analysts because of a strategic bias in American military circles. The additional reading course will be incorporated through a reading cycle that requires students to complete a certain amount of reading prior to arriving at OBC. The MIOBC course manager can have the various

pre-commissioning sources disseminate the reading list to future MI cadets and officer candidates. The MIOBC course manager might also make the readings available through the course website. Once at OBC, students will then be guided through their readings by teachers with academic, not military, backgrounds. Discussion will occur in small groups and follow-on reading assignments will be given throughout the week. Finally, student assessments will be through essay questions instead of multiple choice quizzes. These short and long answer essay questions can better assess each student's ability to apply the theoretical readings to a tactical environment. For example, students might be asked to read message traffic and make an assessment of enemy motives and likely courses of action and then must justify their assessments using the relevant data as well as applicable theoretical sources.

In addition to essay quizzes throughout the block, students will engage in a final capstone exercise that, like the JICTC exercise, immerses them in an instructor created scenario but this time, the exercise will immerse students within a mock insurgency. Currently, students undergo a half day practical exercise called Scorpion Tactical Decision Game. Within the expanded block of insurgency/COIN instruction, Scorpion TDG would become greatly expanded. Much like the ISR village scenario, students will take on certain roles but they will then be asked to develop for themselves an insurgency. The students playing insurgents will have to justify why they made the decisions they did while others playing the mass base must justify why they did or did not support the insurgency. Those playing the incumbent power will have to justify their reactions and counter reactions to insurgent activity. The total time for the exercise should be no less than 36 hours. This exercise will require at least 30 hours of full, 100% character

immersion followed by a 4 hour student evaluation and exercise AAR. The remaining 2 hours can be devoted to preparing.

In order to expand insurgency/COIN theoretical instruction from three days to seven without extending the overall length of MIOBC, some sacrifices must be made in other areas. I do not mean to imply that there are some segments of MIOBC that are less useful than others but there currently is a great deal of redundancy in instruction. I've outlined below where redundancy occurs in the course. The circled areas are days of instruction where lessons are redundant with lessons covered earlier in the course or can be better organized to minimize the time spent on those lessons.

Module B	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43
	Intro to Mod B: Insurgency and COIN Assign Irregular Warfare Case Studies B-1	Irregular Warfare Case Studies (IWCS) Prep: SACSO Intel COIN Book Discussion B-2	Intro OP Desert Lightning II PE Urban IPB: Quiz 1 Study Focus B-3*	Quiz 1: IED Awareness/MPG "Scorpions" TDG B-4*	Collection Management (PIR) B-5*	Collection Management (PIR/HAI/ISM) B-6*	Analytical Tools & IWCS Study Check B-7*	Example BUB & OP Desert Lightning II and PE (BUB 1) B-8*	Analyst Notebook: IBCGS: OP Desert Lightning II PE B-9*	Pathfinder OP Desert Lightning II PE (12-24 Dec) B-10*	OP Desert Lightning II PE (Bn MB) B-11*	Inf 2 J5 and Office Participant in COIN ACH: Quiz 2 Study Focus B-12*	IWCS Brief: OP Desert Lightning II PE (25-26 Dec) (BUB 3 PMB) Quiz 3 Study Focus B-13*	COIN Targeting Final Test B-14*	Quiz 4: OP Desert Lightning II PE (BUB 4) Mod B AAR B-15*	Mod B Final Test OP Desert Lightning II PE (BUB 4) Mod B AAR B-16*
Module C	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55				
	Classified HUMINT	Classified CI/HUMINT	Classified GEOINT	Classified SIGINT	Classified SIGINT/GEOR II	Classified AFGHAN- CS	Classified AFGHAN Road to War	Classified AFGHAN	Classified AFGHAN	Classified AFGHAN	Classified AFGHAN	Classified				
Module D	56	57	58	59	60	61	62									
	5 CPX: OPERATION UNBREAKABLE D-1	CPX: OPERATION UNBREAKABLE B-2	CPX: OPERATION UNBREAKABLE B-3	CPX: OPERATION UNBREAKABLE B-4	CPX: OPERATION UNBREAKABLE B-5	CPX: OPERATION UNBREAKABLE B-6	Late Start CPX: OPERATION UNBREAKABLE D-7									
JCTC	63	64	65	66	67	68	69									
	Classified JI-CTC J-1	Classified JI-CTC J-2	Classified JI-CTC J-3	Classified JI-CTC J-4	Classified JI-CTC J-5	Classified JI-CTC J-6	Classified JI-CTC J-7									

The practical exercises during Module B can be compressed so that students are required to give two Battle Update Briefs a day instead of one. This forces students to be more efficient with their time, produce analysis and products under stringent time constraints, and demands that students operate under more stressful conditions. This compression would yield one day. If we compress the CI/HUMINT, SIGINT, and GEOINT briefs in the week prior to and in preparation for JCTC, we can easily gain an

additional two days. Currently, the briefs are much too long in length and the amount of time spent on the material is not commensurate with the actual amount of information passed along to students. This is potentially the result of a generational gap between instructors and students; for MIOBC students fully immersed in an internet culture, GEOINT and NRO briefs that go over ad nauseum how to download images from a website is clearly unnecessary. Finally, having already gone through the asset briefs prior to JICTC, students in MIOBC do not need the repeat briefs given at JICTC which cover the exact same information already briefed. This would curtail the JICTC in processing days from two to one and yield another day for insurgency/COIN instruction.

The desired end state for expanding insurgency/COIN instruction is as stated earlier that all graduates of MIOBC become premier analysts in the same way that students who complete the Van Deman Program are expected to be. Premier analysts not only have a better understanding and analysis of insurgent short, intermediate, and long term goals but they can better serve their commanders as red-teamers during the war gaming portion of the MDMP. The broader theoretical understanding can equip MIOBC graduates to think outside of the box when producing non-lethal targets. Because of the multivariate nature of conducting IPB for the urban environment, MIOBC graduates with a more thorough understanding of all theoretical underpinnings of social networks and political processes are better equipped to provide a more in-depth analysis of the urban operational environment. And finally, in the long term, as MIOBC graduates advance through their careers, they can spearhead the doctrinal shift necessary within the Army to help all soldiers in every branch understand both sides of the COIN fight.